

Did You Know There is a New Law That May Affect Your Retirement Benefits?

On September 19, 2000, the President signed an important piece of legislation that may affect you. The legislation is the Federal Erroneous Retirement Coverage Correction Act (FERCCA), and it provides relief to employees who were in the wrong retirement plan for at least 3 years of service after December 31, 1986.

Despite agencies' extensive efforts to find and correct retirement coverage errors, there are still some employees in the wrong retirement plan. If this is you, we need to hear from you, too. The section, ***How Do I Know if I'm in the Right Retirement Plan?*** will help you figure out if you might be in the wrong retirement plan.

How Can FERCCA Help Me?

If you were in the wrong retirement plan for at least 3 years of service after December 31, 1986, FERCCA can help you in one or more of the following ways:

- You may have an opportunity to choose another retirement plan;
- You may be reimbursed for certain out-of-pocket expenses you paid as a result of a coverage error;
- You may benefit from certain changes in the rules about how some of your Government service counts toward retirement; and
- You may be able to make up contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan and get make-up earnings on those contributions as well.

What Do I Need to Do Now?

If you think FERCCA can help you, please contact your servicing personnel assistant. We will review your Official Personnel Folder to determine if you are in the incorrect retirement system. If it is determined that you may be in the wrong retirement system; We will add your name to a FERCCA database that the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has established.

What Will Happen Next?

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management has set up a plan to help everyone who is entitled to relief by FERCCA. Identifying all the employees that FERCCA can help is only the first step. The plan includes:

- Identifying employees and adding their names to the database;
- Gathering information on those employees from personnel and payroll records and other sources;
- Verifying employees' options under FERCCA; and
- Helping employees who have a choice of retirement plans make informed decisions.

OPM's goal is to ensure that everyone receives the same high level of customer service.

If it is determined that you have a choice of retirement plans, you will receive an in-depth comparison of your benefits under each option. This comparison will include how much you can expect to receive under each retirement plan, including Social Security and Thrift Savings Plan benefits. OPM will provide you with an opportunity for one-on-one personal assistance to help you weigh your options. This individual assistance will be available to anyone who has a choice under FERCCA.

OPM is working with agencies to implement the necessary counseling sessions as quickly as possible. OPM expects counseling to begin no later than **June 1, 2001**.

Who Can I Contact for More Information?

If you have any questions concerning your retirement plan or FERCCA, please contact your servicing personnel assistant on (301) 496-6924:

Laboratory Medicine	Veronica Olaaje
Critical Care Medicine	Kali Gamble
Diagnostic Radiology	Veronica Olaaje
Laboratory of Diagnostic Radiology Research	Veronica Olaaje
Housekeeping	Paulette Baldwin
Information Systems	Rogene Shank
Materials Management	Laura West
Nursing	Laura West
Medical Records	Paulette Baldwin
Nuclear Medicine	Kali Gamble
Nutrition Department	Kali Gamble
Office of the Director	Rogene Shank
Bioethics	Veronica Olaaje
OHRM	Pam Stevenson
Outpatient	Laura West
Social Work	Paulette Baldwin
Spiritual Ministry	Laura West
Transfusion Medicine	Rogene Shank
Anesthesia and Surgical Services	Veronica Olaaje

You can monitor OPM's progress in implementing FERCCA by visiting OPM's error correction web site at www.opm.gov/benefits/correction. You can also sign up on the email subscription list to receive updates directly by email. You can access the email subscription list by clicking on the "Subscribe to Email" link on OPM's web site.

How Do I Know if I'm in the Right Retirement Plan?

Which retirement plan you belong in depends upon the type of appointment you have and your work history. The rules can be complicated. That's why some employees are in the wrong plan.

Most employees who started working for the Government after 1983 should be in FERS. Those who started working for the Government on a permanent basis before 1984 should be in CSRS unless they elected FERS or left Government employment for a while. When errors occur, they often involve situations where an employee has breaks in Government service or changes in appointments.

Below are some of the common errors, broken down by retirement plan. Find your retirement plan and see if you fit into any of the situations listed. (If you don't know your retirement plan, you can find it by looking in Block 30 on one of your Standard Form 50s, Notifications of Personnel Actions.) If you fit one of the situations listed, you may be in the wrong plan. Remember, there are exceptions to the general rules. You may be in the right retirement plan because you fall under one of the exceptions (like the one shown under CSRS Offset). If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your servicing personnel assistant who will check to make sure that you are in the right retirement plan.

If your retirement plan is:	Then you may be in the wrong plan if you:
CSRS	<p>Worked for the Government before 1984, but not on a permanent basis; or</p> <p>Left Federal employment for more than a year at any time after 1983.</p>
CSRS or CSRS Offset	<p>Have a temporary appointment limited to a year or less, a term appointment, or an emergency indefinite appointment; or</p> <p>Have no Federal civilian employment before 1984; or</p> <p>Do not have a career or career conditional appointment and you work on an intermittent basis. (See the work schedule block on your SF-50.)</p>
CSRS Offset	<p>Did not work for the Government for a total of 5 years before 1987. (Don't count your military service.)</p> <p>Exception: If you worked under CSRS, left the Government, and your agency placed you in CSRS Offset on your return, your CSRS Offset coverage is probably correct if you had 5 years of Government service when you left.)</p>
FERS	<p>Have a temporary appointment limited to a year or less; or</p> <p>Do not have a career or career conditional appointment and you work on an intermittent basis; or</p> <p>Have worked for the Government under a retirement plan continuously since December 31, 1983, unless you elected to transfer to FERS during the 1987 or 1998 FERS Open Seasons.</p>